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LARRY CRAIG

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NEWS RELEASE

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AG COMMITTEE CLEARS FARM BILL

Craig's specialty crop provisions included

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Senate Agriculture Committee approved the 2007 farm bill today, sending it to the full Senate for consideration. Idaho Senator Larry Craig successfully worked with the committee to include robust specialty crop provisions as a subtitle in the bill. Inclusion of these provisions means approximately \$2.2 billion will be available through new or existing programs to assist and support specialty crop producers, plus an additional \$850 million in disaster assistance. Idaho is among the leaders in production of a number of specialty crops, including potatoes, cherries, table grapes, apples, carrots, onions and seed crops.

Specialty crops account for \$53 billion in crop cash receipts for U.S. producers, which is nearly half of all crop cash receipts in the nation. Still, this is the first time in history that specialty crops have been included in a comprehensive manner in federal farm policy.

“Congress is long overdue in recognizing the significance of the U.S. specialty crop industry by giving them a place in the farm bill,” Craig said. “We’re taking a major step forward in acknowledging the contribution of specialty crops both to the ag economy and to the health of all Americans. The specialty crop provisions I fought for in this bill will help our farmers meet the need for a stable, affordable, diverse, and secure supply of food, produced right here at home.

“I would also like to thank Senator Stabenow, who has been a tireless champion of this issue, and Senator Crapo, who helped carry this across the finish line in the committee,” Craig continued.

The specialty crop subtitle largely mirrors language introduced by Senator Craig and Senator Stabenow (D-Mich.) earlier this year in S.1160, the Specialty Crop Competition Act of 2007.

Several provisions will directly benefit Idaho consumers and producers of specialty crops:

- **School Snack Program** - Increases funding for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program which makes fresh fruits and vegetables freely available in schools nationwide. The program is designed to increase children's consumption of fruits and vegetables to improve overall health and reduce the risk of obesity.
- **Specialty Crop Research** - Establishes a specialty crop priority-focused grant program, awarding grants to eligible public and private entities to improve the efficiency and competitiveness of U.S. specialty crop producers.
- **Pests and Disease Programs** – Establishes programs to protect the domestic specialty crop industry by preventing or eradicating pest and disease threats in the United States, such as Potato Cyst Nematode.

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- **Block Grants** - Expands the State Block Grants for Specialty Crops program, which helped launch the “Idaho Preferred” certification mark for Idaho products and funded University of Idaho research on specialty and alternative fruit crops in Idaho, including table grapes.
- **Trade Assistance** – Increases funding for programs to boost U.S. specialty crop exports by facilitating the removal of specialty crop trade barriers abroad.

Extended audio comments from Craig are available at
<http://craig.senate.gov/clips/pr102507a.mp3>.